



**Quinebaug Valley
Emergency
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Senator Timothy Larson, Co-Chair, Public Safety & Security Committee
Representative Stephen Dargan, Co-Chair, Public Safety & Security Committee
Senator Anthony Guglielmo, Ranking Member, Public Safety & Security Committee
Representative Lezlye Zupkus, Ranking Member, Public Safety & Security Committee
Honorable Members of the Public Safety & Security Committee,

My name is Jeffrey Otto, President of QVEC, operator of a large regional PSAP in Northeast Connecticut. After July 1, we will answer 911 calls and dispatch emergency responders in nineteen towns, two boroughs and one fire district comprising thirty-eight fire departments and seventeen EMS organizations. We transfer police calls to two police organizations, including one municipal police department and territory covered by two Troops of the Connecticut State Police. We serve a population of 126,000 over 600 square miles and have done so for forty-two years. I testify to urge support for **H.B.5544**.

911 calls in Connecticut are received at 106 PSAPs. Of these, seven are Regional Emergency Communications Centers that serve three or more municipalities (these serve 44% of Connecticut's municipalities and 48.7% of its area), and nine are Multitown Dispatch Centers that serve exactly two municipalities. Except for six that are located at State Police barracks that serve high volume highway areas, the remaining eighty-six PSAPs serve single municipalities, sixty-three of which cover municipalities of fewer than 40,000 residents. Nationally, there are many examples of single PSAPs that serve populations greater than that of our entire state. Over half of Connecticut's PSAPs receive less than one 911 call per hour. Connecticut has the largest number of PSAPs per capita of any state. This embarrassment has been the subject of study by the MORE Commission, the New England Public Policy Center of the Federal Reserve Bank and the subject of this legislature's action in 1996, 2004 and 2010. The clear and unmistakable intent of the legislature since 1996 has been that a subsidy program supported by telephone surcharges that takes into account the population served, the number of emergency services dispatched, and **the number of municipalities served** should be used to incentivize consolidation of PSAPs and thereby reduce costs and complexity to both the municipalities and the state's government.

In 2010 the legislature passed P.A.10-125, a Bill that was nearly identical to **H.B. 5544**. Unfortunately, Gov. Rell vetoed it. We encourage the Public Safety and Security Committee to act favorably on this Bill, since it is the only effort proposed by the legislature that will attack the problem of a grossly excessive number of PSAPs in Connecticut. *If the agency responsible for encouraging PSAP reduction has been ineffective in this matter for nearly twenty years, the Legislature must take action to effect PSAP reduction.* This act also will pave the way for proposals that are under study at the FCC that will attempt to reduce very significantly the number of PSAPs across the nation as NG911 is adopted. This Bill will benefit state government, but its primary beneficiaries will be taxpayers whose local property taxes will benefit from the support of larger and much more efficient PSAPs.

In this period of extreme financial pressure on government entities of all sizes, it is up to the legislature to take action to improve efficiency and to lower costs to local taxpayers. For those municipalities that for whatever reason chose not to receive the benefits of regionalization, the Bill allows them to continue to operate one town PSAPs. To do so they must pay using their own funds, not the resources of the state.

We urge the Legislature in the strongest terms to continue the work it began in 1996 to incentivize regionalization of this essential public safety service by enacting **H.B. 5544**.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.